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Ralf Klausnitzer: *Blaue Blume unterm Hakenkreuz: Die Rezeption der deutschen literarischen Romantik im Dritten Reich*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1999.
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In 1802, the *blaue Blume* first appeared in German literature. It was introduced by Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and it came to have a life of its own, becoming a symbol of romantic longing, an orientation point for a literary and philosophical movement committed to human cultivation, unhindered creativity, and democratic ideals. What could be the fate of this delicate creature in the shadows of Germany's harshest, darkest symbol, the swastika? In his book, *Blaue Blume unterm Hakenkreuz*, Ralf Klausnitzer explores this history. Klausnitzer's thorough and well-researched account of the reception of German Romanticism during the Third Reich documents what happens when a movement is uprooted and replanted in the noxious soil of inhumanity and political oppression.

Klausnitzer provides the reader with information on an important, albeit disturbing, chapter of intellectual history and in so doing helps to correct certain misconceptions regarding the nature of German Romanticism and its relation to

Nazism. There is a general conception of Romanticism, whereby it is seen as an anti-Enlightenment movement that privileged feelings over reason, glorified the „German Spirit“, endorsing the sort of nationalism that would rear its ugly head in the fascism of twentieth century Germany. In a recently published collection of lectures by Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton University Press, 1999), German Romanticism is characterized as a movement bent on a path of the destruction of reason and science, culminating in a pernicious nationalism that gave way to fascism. Another, perhaps even more exaggerated source adding to a misconception of Romanticism is Georg Lukács', *The Destruction of Reason*. In this study, Lukács goes so far as to create a history which directly links Hitler to Schelling. But, as Manfred Frank has shown, Lukács' history is riddled with error, because Schelling was no Romantic, and the Nazis, as can be shown in detail, hated the protagonists of early German Romanticism.¹ There is no compelling evidence that can link Schelling to Hitler.

¹ See Manfred Frank, „Wie reaktionär war eigentlich die Frühromantik? (Elemente zur Aufstörung der Meinungsbildung)“. In: *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997), p. 141-166.

Given the crude caricatures that plague a serious understanding of German Romanticism, causing too many scholars to inaccurately locate the roots of Nazism in German Romanticism, any serious study that helps to shed light on the relation between National Socialism and Romanticism is most welcome. Klausnitzer's exhaustive study of the reception of literary Romanticism during the Third Reich will undoubtedly help to correct some of the crude caricatures of German Romanticism that impede a proper understanding of the movement. Moreover, Klausnitzer's study sheds new light on how the darkest chapter of German history affected how Romanticism was taught, studied, written about, published, and, in effect, reinvented.

The book is comprised of three parts. The first and longest part of the study is dedicated to a discussion of literary investigations of Romanticism. This part contains seven chapters, which take the reader from 1900 to the period of the Third Reich, providing a reconstruction of the literary reception of Romanticism in Germany. Klausnitzer focuses in particular on the period from 1933-1945, in order to clearly analyze and discuss how the reception of Romanticism along primarily philological lines was transformed, during a period of political depravity, into a reception that, for the most part, deformed Romanticism, instrumentalizing its texts to serve the purposes of the regime's propaganda, and selectively dismissing those texts and authors who did not fit into the claustrophobically narrow interpretative frame demanded by the regime.

A prototypical progenitor of the National Socialists' reception of Romanticism is found in the person and work of Hans Pyritz, who lectured widely on Romanticism and whose prejudices seriously distorted the movement. Pyritz demonizes Friedrich Schlegel because of his relation with Dorothea Veit, the daughter of Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. According to Pyritz, the ideal romantic community established in Jena at the end of the eighteenth century was destroyed by Dorothea's „anmaßende und taktlose Wesen der Rassefremden“ (p. 322). Pyritz's shameless anti-Semitism is well documented by Klausnitzer: we are told that „Dorothea wurde mit antisemitischen Klischees belegt“ (p. 322) and then given an example of one of Pyritz's disgusting descriptions: „An sich grob, aber erst einmal anpassungsfähig. Beschränkt, gehässig, aber Schlegel sklavisch hingegen, abgöttisch, anbetend, alle Wege mitgehend, alle seine Einseitigkeiten noch übersteigernd, Spiegel und Echo, und damit ihn bis zuletzt fesselnd. Nicht Ursache, sondern Ausdruck seines Schicksals“ (p. 322). Only a grotesquely selective reading of the Romantics, which amounted to a complete deformation of the movement and its members, enabled an anti-Semite like Pyritz to dedicate himself to Romanticism. One wishes Klausnitzer had spent more time discussing the tensions between Pyritz's anti-Semitic views and his engagement with German Romanticism, a movement that called for the equal treatment of *all* Germans, regardless of their religion, and moreover, a movement that counted many Jewish intellectuals amongst its members

and its forbearers (recall that the revival of Spinoza in Germany can be attributed to the early German Romantics).

Klausnitzer's account in the seven chapters of Part I, provides abundant evidence of how the *Forschungspolitik* of the Third Reich affected the *Forschungslandschaft* and the portrait of Romanticism that emerged. The *blaue Blume* became lost in the dark shadows of the *Hakenkreuz*. We are told of an admirable exception: Rudolf Fahrner did pen a sharp criticism of Hitler, yet this is just mentioned in passing, few details are given of Fahrner's work (p. 356). And while there is solid reporting throughout each of the chapters of Part I, with many important sources presented to the reader, one wishes that more questions would have been asked about why there was not more opposition amongst scholars who must have been aware that the oppressive political landscape was leading them to mutilate their own field of study—two leaders of Romantic research, Heinz Kindermann and Paul Kluckhohn even kept Josef Körner's volume on Friedrich Schlegel out of the *Deutsche Literatur in Entwicklungsreihen* series, because Schlegel was a Romantic whose affection and ties to Jews were simply not acceptable to the Nazi regime (p. 355). Even the journal *Euphorion* had to be re-named: in an instance of the dark side of political correctness, it became *Dichtung und Volkstum* (p. 355).

In Part II of his study, Klausnitzer gives details concerning why Romanticism, contrary to the widely held view, was not generally attractive to the National Socialists. Two of National Socialism's leading ar-

chitects, Alfred Baeumler and Ernst Krieck, dismissed Romanticism as too soft (p. 400). Krieck disliked, in particular, the overpowering position that women enjoyed in the German Romantic movement, whether the women were the daughters of Göttingen professors (an obvious reference to Caroline Böhmer) or, even worse, „Berlin Jews“ (one thinks of Henriette Herz and Rahel Varhagen, the leaders of some of Berlin's liveliest salons during the late 1700s). In the eyes of Krieck, any friend of a Jew was an enemy of the truly German tradition, and he saw the obvious tensions between Romanticism and National Socialism. For the National Socialists, anything outside of the German tradition was bad: all things true, good, and beautiful had to be German, in their narrow sense of that term of course. The *eigendeutsche* Tradition they hoped to create was threatened by looking for its roots in Romanticism, a movement that was open to other cultures and was very much a product of the German-Jewish intellectual tradition.

Romanticism could only be embraced by the Nazis when it became twisted and deformed by some of the National Socialist Movement's architects. The contradictory nature of romantic theories as they developed within the ideological and theoretical discourse developed during the National Socialist period in Germany is highlighted by Klausnitzer in the three chapters of Part II, where he presents some of the leading conceptions of Romanticism that were developed and defended by Alfred Rosenberg and Joseph Goebbels. Rosenberg's *artverbundene Romantik* is contrasted to Joseph Goebbels,

stählerne Romantik: the former appropriated Romanticism as an embrace of mythology and a move to the past with a rejection of the heartless technology of the present, while the latter endorsed a view of Romanticism as very much in keeping with the mood of the period's emphasis on the profit of technical modernization. In spite of attempts to subsume all ideas under one embracing ideology, during National Socialism key terms of the period such as, 'the organic', 'the Volk', and 'the nation' were not developed uniformly; there was in fact a plurality of approaches to defining these terms and of defining the Romantic movement. With respect to this plurality, Klausnitzer poses a crucial question: how is one to interpret a plurality of views concerning Romanticism that develop under a dictatorship that relied upon *one* all-embracing ideology? Klausnitzer suggests that this plurality points to contradictions not only within the ideology but within the very reception of Romanticism by the National Socialists. Klausnitzer argues that the main source of the tension at both levels lay in the perceived relation of National Socialism and Romanticism to modernity. Modernity was understood in terms of technology and rationality: the commonly held view is that Romanticism and National Socialism were united in terms of their animosity towards technology and reason. Yet, as Klausnitzer points out, this gets both Romanticism and the reigning ideology of National Socialism wrong. National Socialism has been interpreted by some scholars as a kind of reactionary modernism that united anti-modern, romantic, and irrational

ideas with technical rationality (p. 487). Klausnitzer's study allows the reader to clearly see that throughout the period of National Socialism, Romanticism, more than being studied, was instrumentalized and therefore, it should come as no great surprise that contradictions and incoherencies abound.

In Part III, which is the final section of the study, we learn more details of just how mutilated the presentation of Romanticism was during the Third Reich as Klausnitzer provides a detailed account of how Romanticism was presented to the public during this period. In these four chapters, Klausnitzer discusses how Romanticism was presented in schools. He also documents the series published during the period and the criteria for their selection. The legacy of Romanticism was re-invented and marred through all of these public venues. As Klausnitzer convincingly shows, the cultural-political oppression of the period affected the ways in which the work of romantic authors such as Novalis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Clemens Brentano, Achim von Arnim, and others, was presented. Most of the biographies of romantic authors that were written during this period were limited by the dismissal of any information that did not fit into the party-line view of Romanticism that served the political ends of the regime. So, for example, Ina Seidel dismisses Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (p. 580): there was simply not room in the Nazi regime for an appreciation of the subversive irony and playfulness found in this work. There were a few admirable exceptions to the generally propaganda-like tone of much of the

work done during the Third Reich. In his biography of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Werner Bergengruen managed to articulate some opposition to the regime „between the lines“, that is, in a way that would not catch the attention of the censors (p. 574).

Klausnitzer ends the study with evidence of the damage done to the legacy of Romanticism during the Third Reich. One of the leading scholars of Romanticism, Josef Körner, came to identify German Romanticism with the creature that grew under the shadows of the swastika. As a result of this distorted perception, Körner became disenchanted with the movement, eventually distancing himself from it. His condemnation of Romanticism was harsh: „In der romantischen Bewegung, deren Dienst ich drei Jahrzehnte meines Lebens gewidmet habe, sehe ich heute das Verhängnis des deutschen und die Hauptkrise des europäischen Geistes, [...] den Hauptherd aller Reaktion und Rebarbarisierung“ (p. 620).

Klausnitzer tells us that his study is not meant to weaken charges like the ones Körner voiced against Romanticism, but rather to illuminate the reception of Romanticism during the darkest chapter of its reception. Yet, it is a great service of his study that the light shed upon the reception of German Romanticism during the Third Reich makes it clear that the curse of the Germans and the re-barbarization of the world can be traced not to the *blaue Blume*, but precisely to its dreadful position *unter dem Hakenkreuz*.

Although one might find fault with Klausnitzer's tendency to document and report facts rather than linger with detailed analyses of the important points he raises, one must commend his ambitious study for the new light it sheds on an issue that anyone interested in a full story of the legacy of German Romanticism must take seriously.